

INVESTING IN HIGH QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

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What is OECD?

- International organisation with 34 member countries (and the European Union)
- Established 50 years ago – Japan joined in 1964
- Mission to promote better policies for better lives
- OECD's strengths are:
 - to engage governments and also a wide range of stakeholders
 - to compare policy experiences across countries and draw together lessons and policy options for countries
 - to link together policies across different sectors to achieve better outcomes

Two key questions

1. Why invest in high quality ECEC?
2. What defines "quality" in ECEC?

1. Why invest in high quality ECEC?

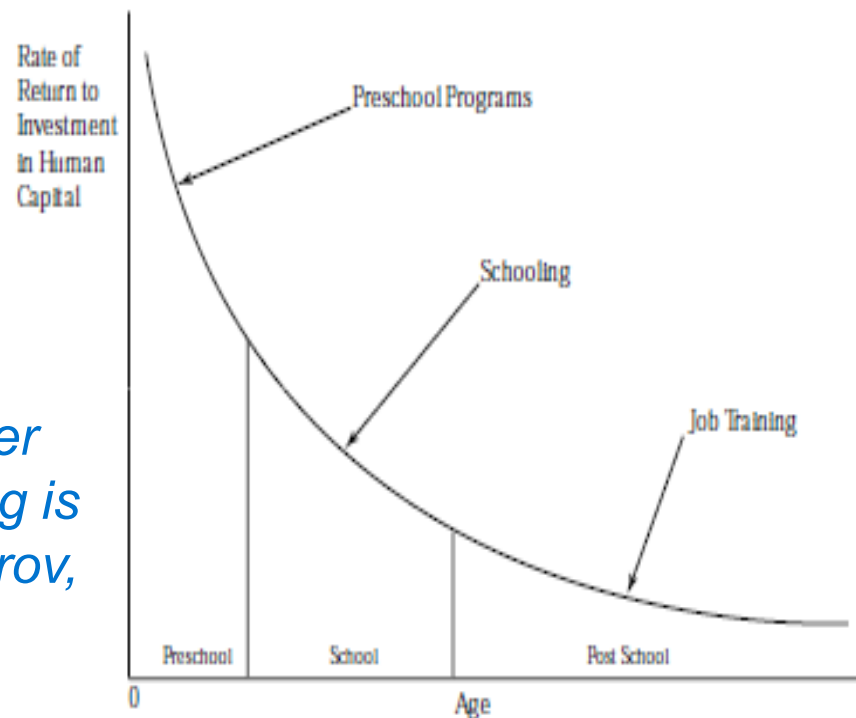
Three rationales:

1. ECEC has significant economic and social payoffs
2. ECEC supports parents and boosts female employment
3. ECEC is part of society's responsibility to educate children, a measure against child poverty and educational disadvantage

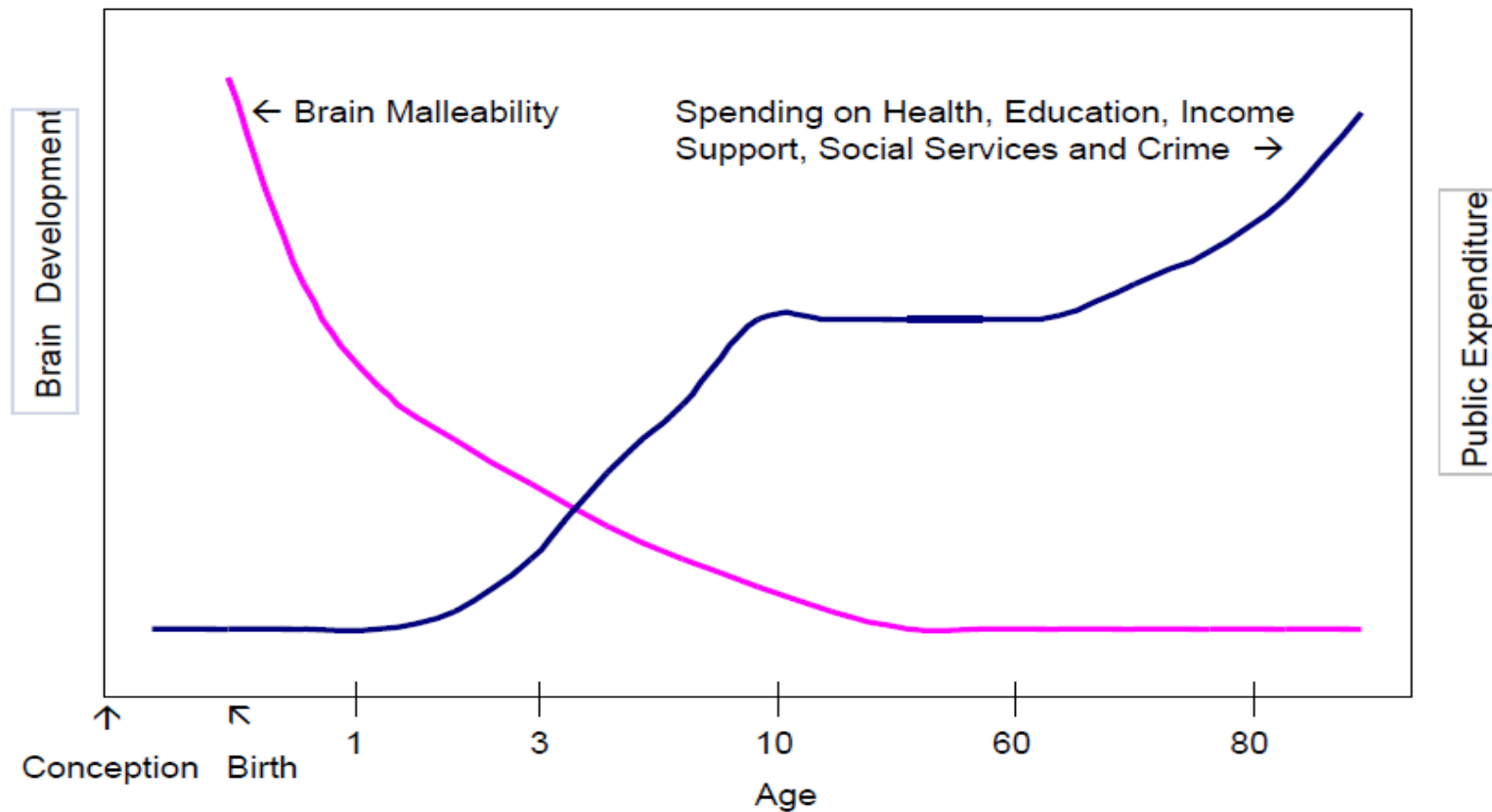
Rationale 1: ECEC has significant economic and social payoffs

a) ECEC helps to raise educational outcomes

“Early skills breed later skills because early learning begets later learning... investment in the young is warranted” Heckman and Masterov, 2007



Brain development and public expenditure



Source: Professor E. Melhuish, keynote presentation, EU conference, Budapest “Excellence and Equity in Early Childhood Education and Care” , 22.02.2011

Perry pre-school study

- an education project experiment in the US in the 1960s
- two groups of children from underprivileged families. One group of children were given two years of pre-school education and the other group was not.
- researchers compared the two groups of children as they grew up – until they were 40 years old

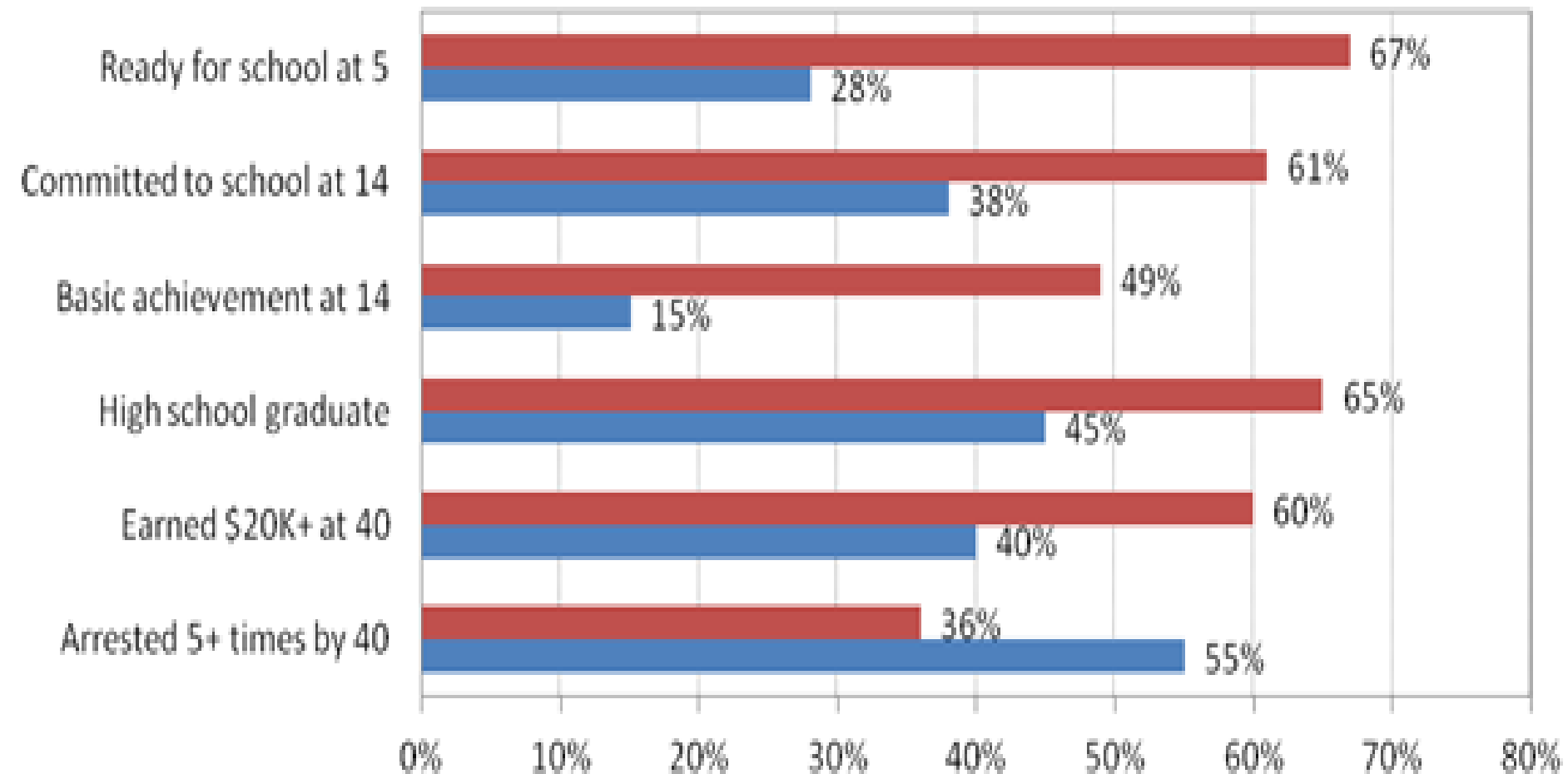
Return on investment at Age 21:

Program benefits per child = \$88 433

Program costs per child = \$12 356

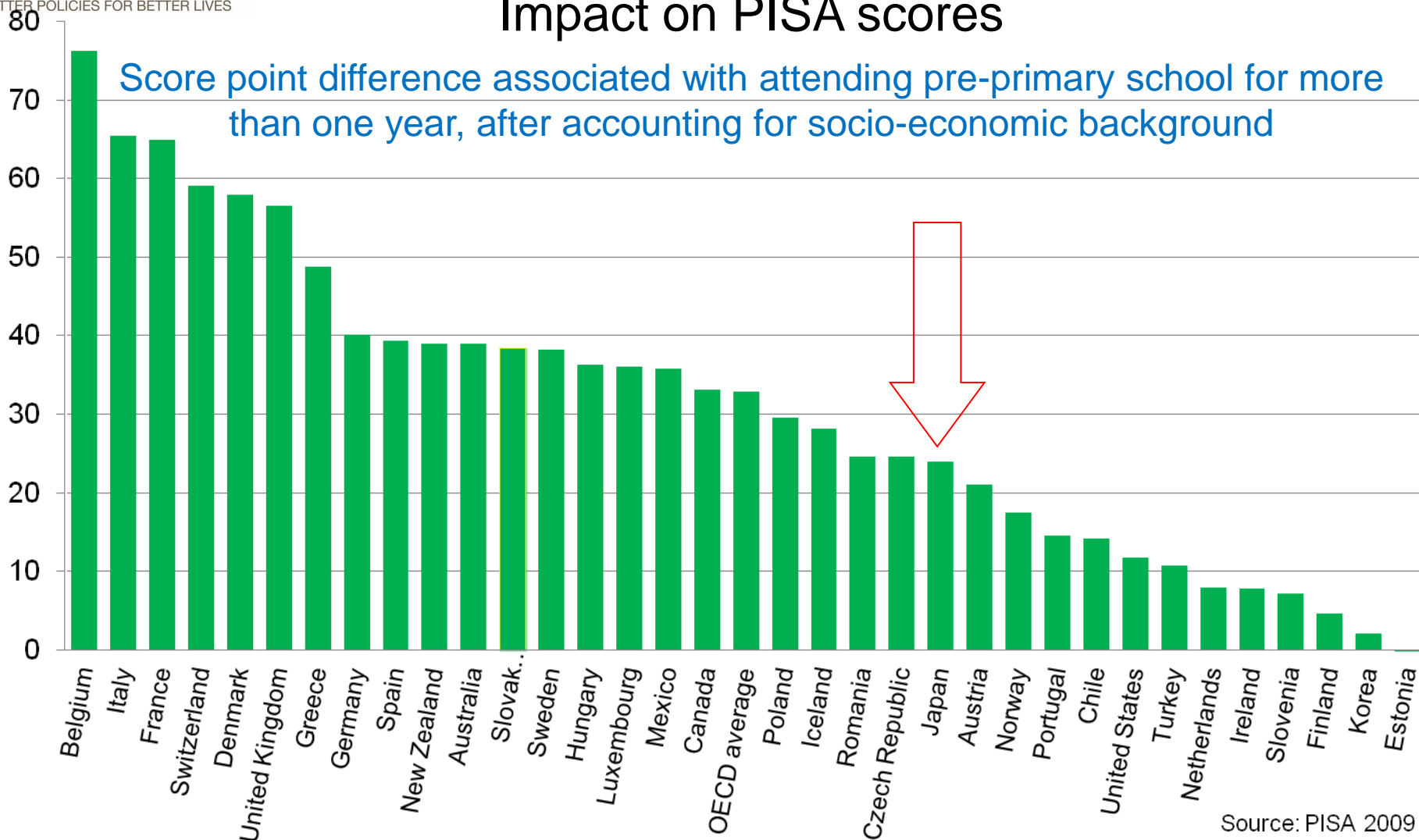
Return on investment per dollar = \$7.16

Perry pre-school study results



Impact on PISA scores

Score point difference associated with attending pre-primary school for more than one year, after accounting for socio-economic background



Source: PISA 2009

b) ECEC also brings wider social benefits

To individuals:

- better health
- reduced likelihood of individuals engaging in risky behaviours
- stronger ‘civic and social engagement’

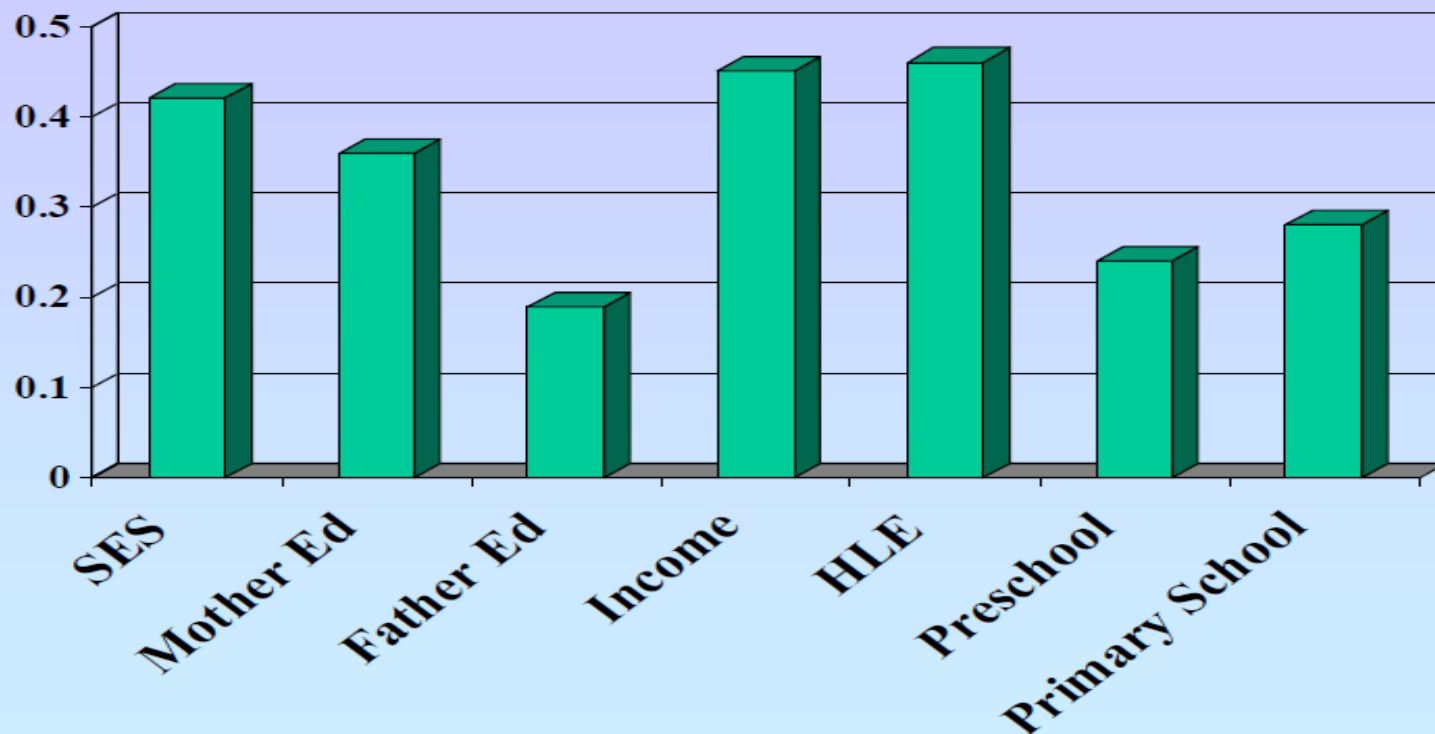
To society through spill-over effects:

- Healthy individuals benefit others
(e.g., smoking, drinking, obesity, STD)
- Cohesive individuals benefit others
(e.g., volunteering, voting, trust)
- Others benefit from living in a “safe” environment

OECD Social Outcomes of Learning (SOL) Project (*Improving Health and Social Cohesion through Education*).

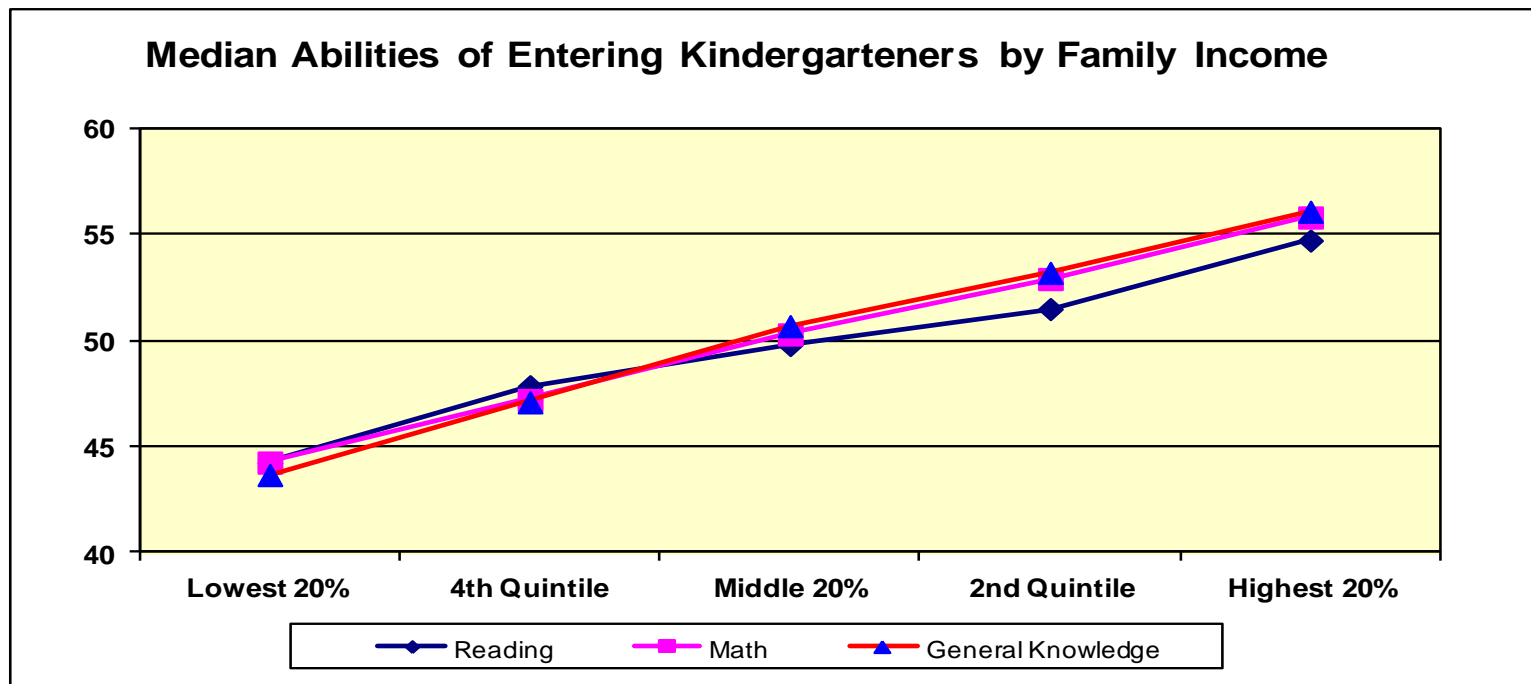
Many factors affect child achievement

Effects upon child achievement -age 11

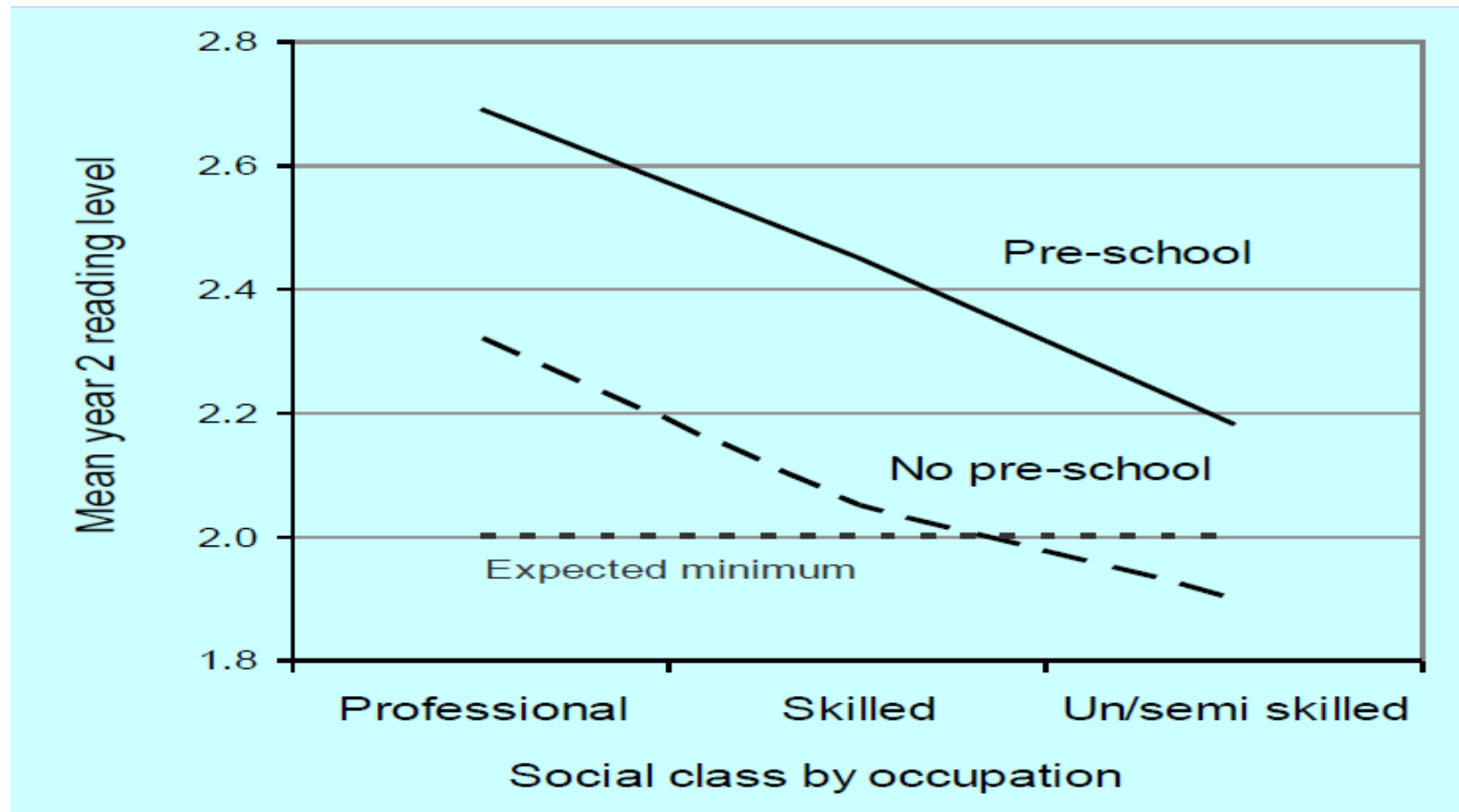


Source: Professor E. Melhuish, keynote presentation, EU conference, Budapest
“Excellence and Equity in Early Childhood Education and Care” , 22.02.2011

- c) Disadvantaged children have the greatest potential to benefit from ECEC because their abilities are less developed when they start school

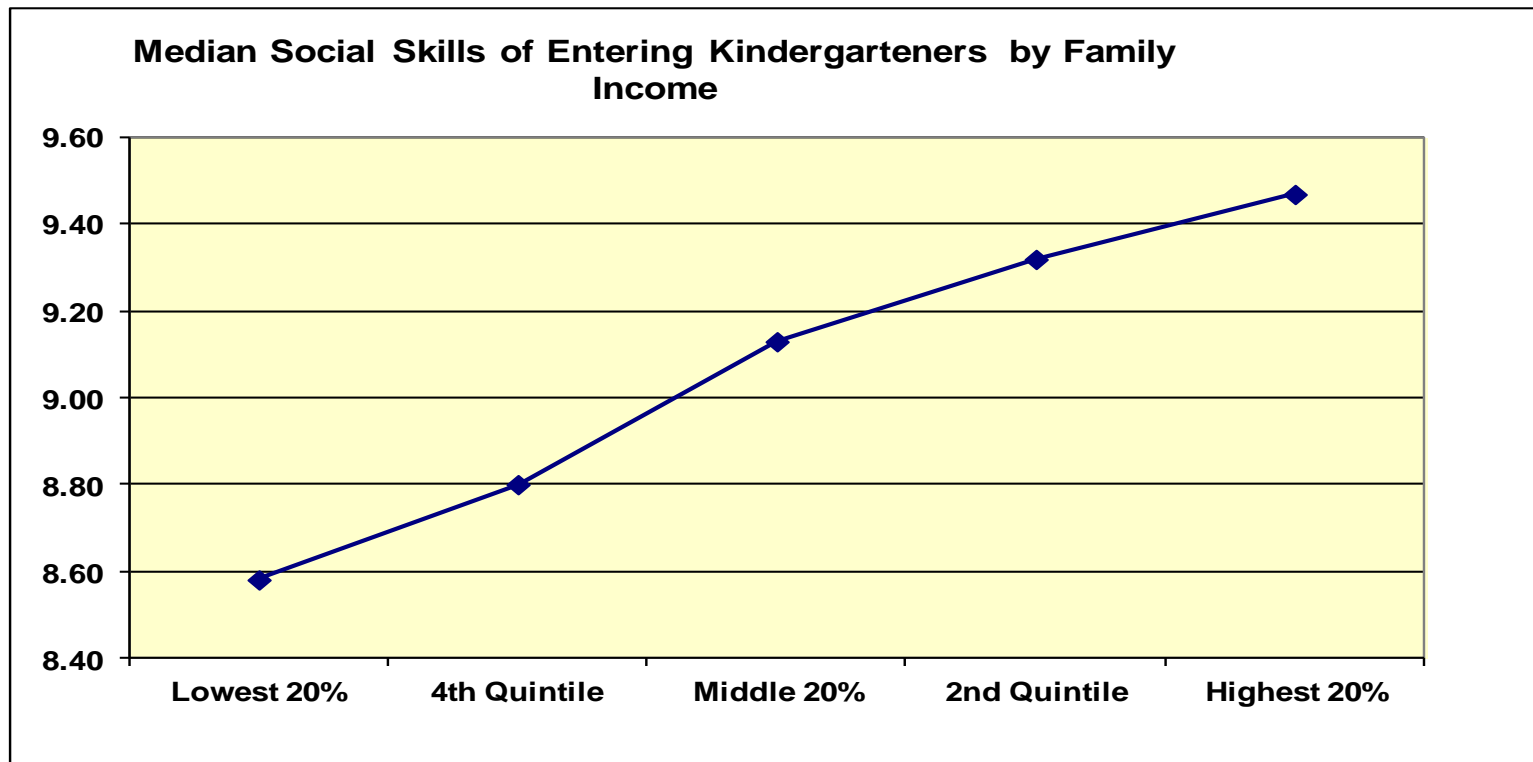


Barnett, W. S. (2007). Original analysis of data from the US Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, ECLS-K Base Year Data files and Electronic Codebook (2002).



Source: Professor E. Melhuish, keynote presentation, EU conference, Budapest
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Disadvantaged children show significant gaps as well on social skills



Barnett, W. S. (2007). Original analysis of data from the US Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, ECLS-K Base Year Data files and Electronic Codebook (2002).

All children gain from high quality ECEC ...
...but disadvantaged children gain more

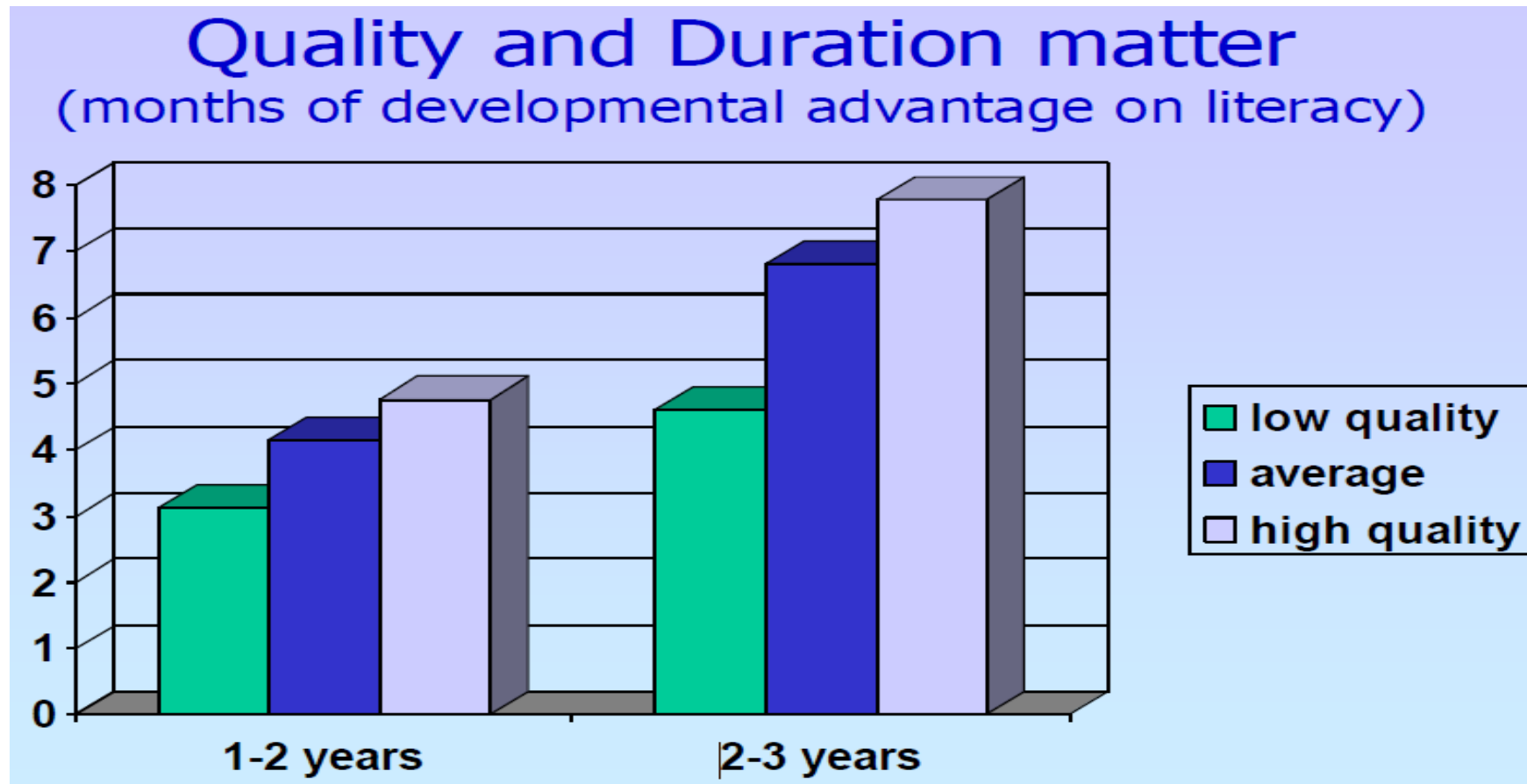
Disadvantaged children more likely to participate when programmes are universal (i.e. offered to all children)

Universal programmes have higher costs, but deliver a larger *net* benefit

But it takes decades to obtain the full benefits

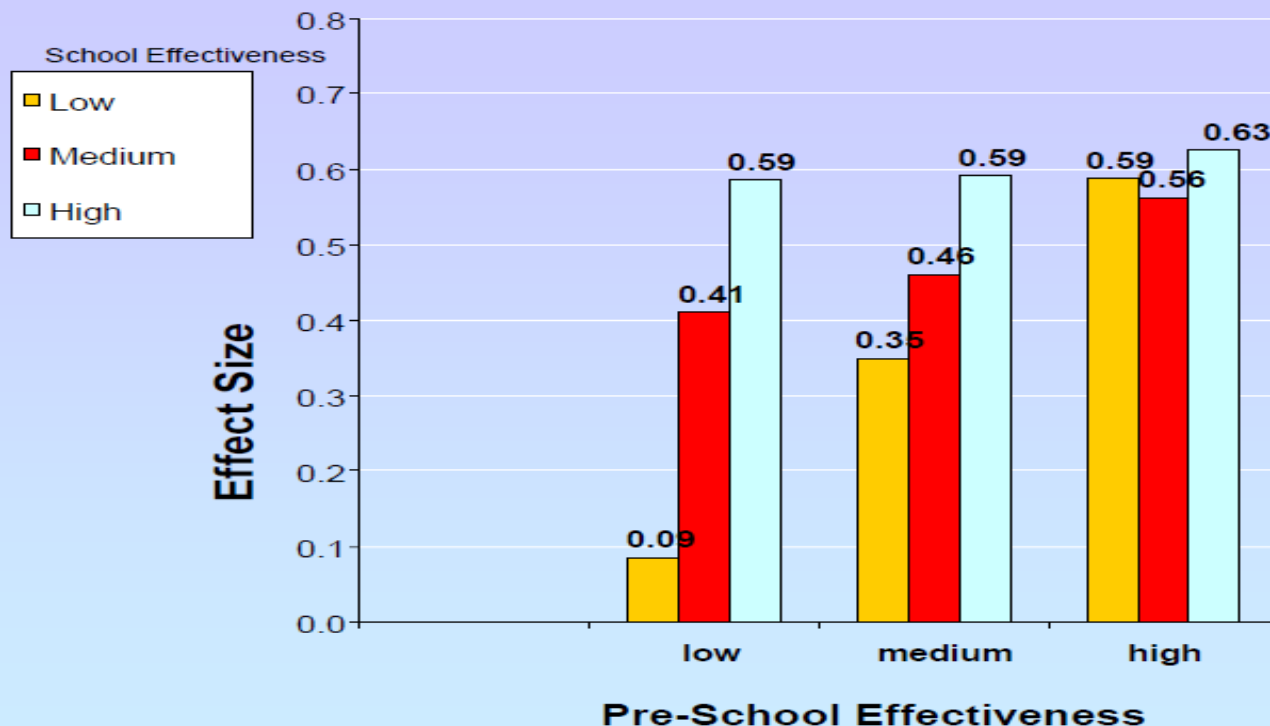
.....While all ECEC costs are incurred up front

And benefits are conditional on “quality”



Source: Professor E. Melhuish, keynote presentation, EU conference, Budapest
 “Excellence and Equity in Early Childhood Education and Care” , 22.02.2011

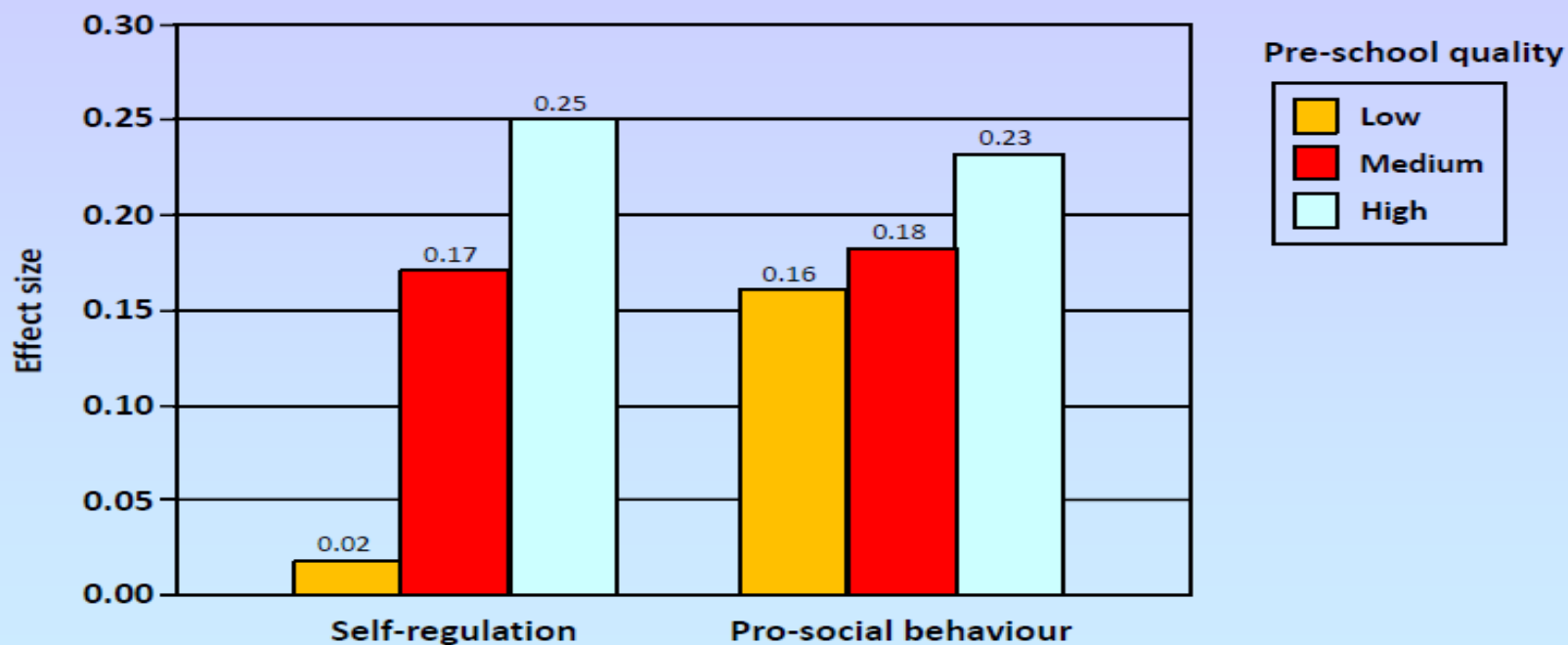
Combined Impact of Pre- and Primary School - Maths



Reference Group: No Pre-School and low Primary School Effectiveness

Source: Professor E. Melhuish, keynote presentation, EU conference, Budapest
“Excellence and Equity in Early Childhood Education and Care” , 22.02.2011

Pre-school Quality and Self-regulation and Pro-social behaviour (age 11)



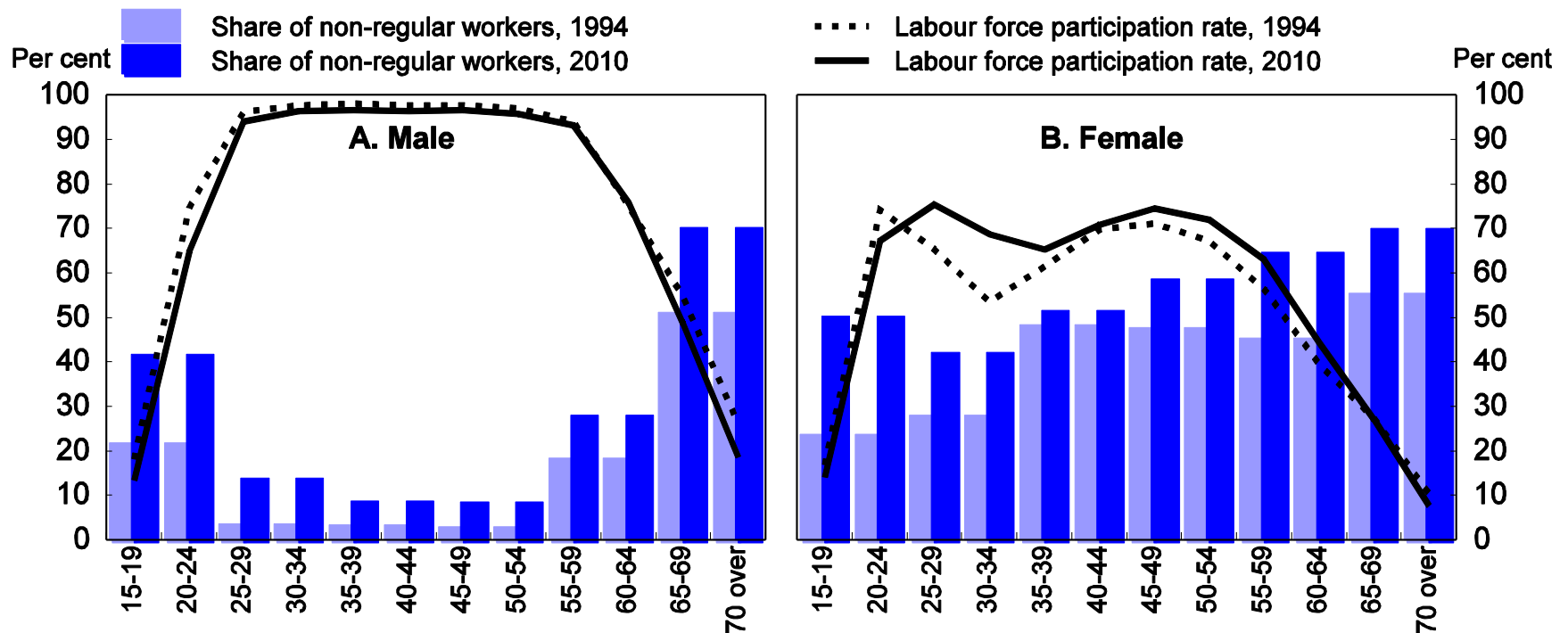
Source: Professor E. Melhuish, keynote presentation, EU conference, Budapest
 “Excellence and Equity in Early Childhood Education and Care” , 22.02.2011

Rationale 2: ECEC can support parents and boost female labour force participation

- Women need high quality, affordable ECEC to be able to return to work, especially if they are the main income earner or want/need two incomes
- High quality, affordable childcare can also help women get/keep regular jobs and also support work-life balance

Labour force in Japan

Labour force participation and share of non-regular workers by age and gender

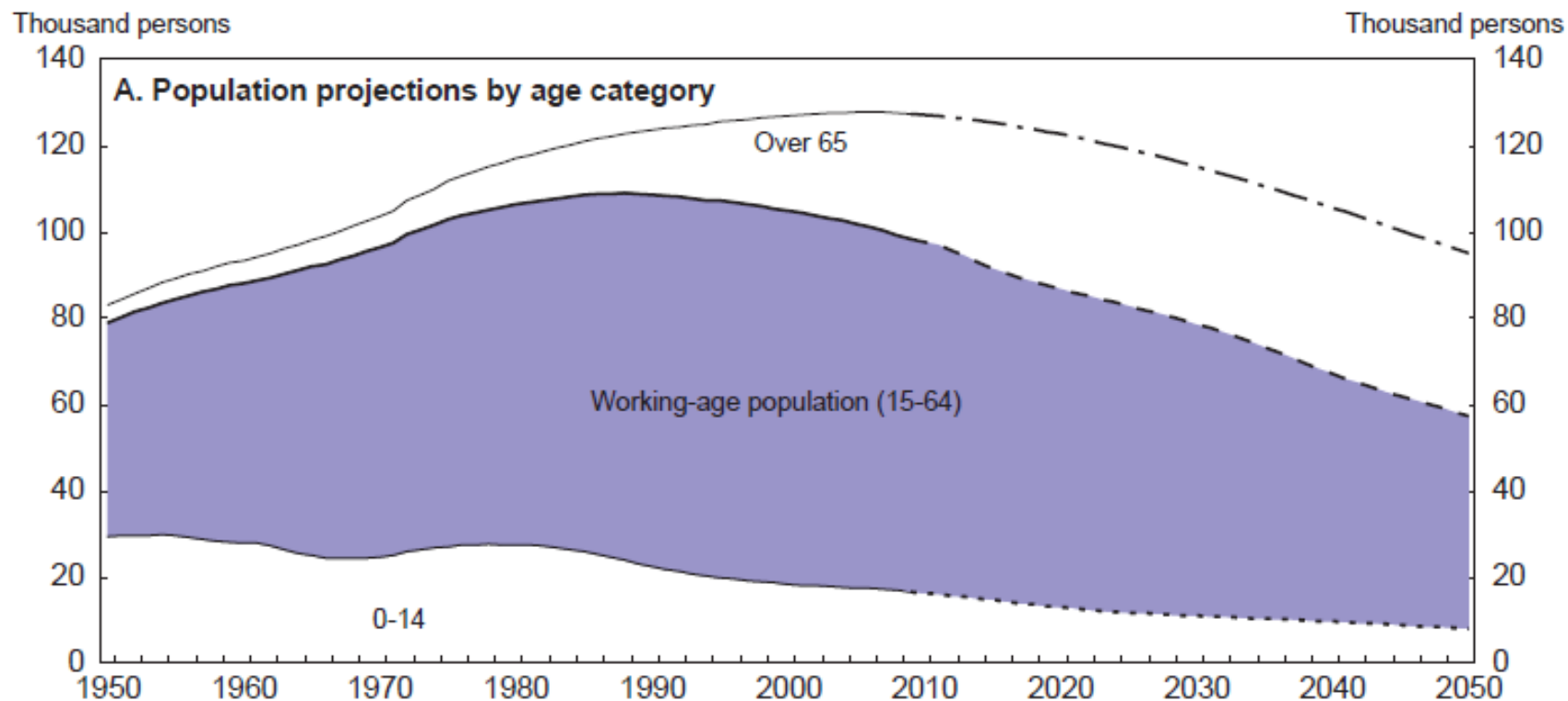


Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Labour Force Survey, and Labour Force Survey (Detailed Tabulation) in OECD (2011) *Economic Survey Japan*, forthcoming

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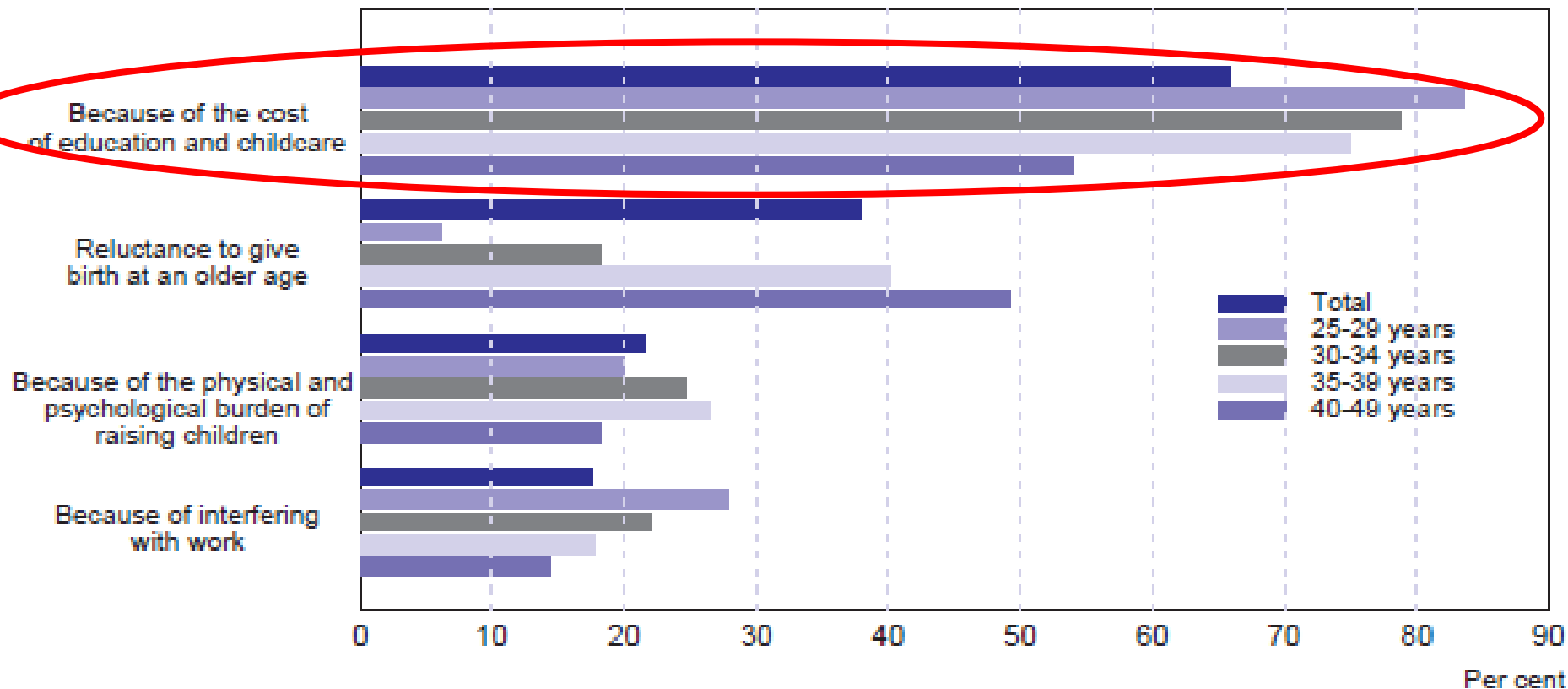
- Women need high quality, affordable ECEC to be able to return to work, especially if they are the main income earner or want/need two incomes
- High quality, affordable childcare can also help women get/keep regular jobs and also support work-life balance
- In recent years, many OECD countries increased budgets to expand ECEC places for working parents
- Cost of ECEC can partly be offset by an increase in the tax base from higher rates of female employment and by increased lifetime employment
- High quality, affordable childcare addresses one of the main reasons for families to have less children than they would like

Rapid population ageing in Japan



Source: OECD (2011) *Economic Survey Japan*, forthcoming

Reasons why Japanese women have fewer children than they would like



Source: MEXT, White Paper on Education 2009

Rationale 3: ECEC is part of society's responsibility to educate children and promote child well-being

- Increasing recognition that governments' responsibility for education of children does not suddenly start when they reach compulsory school age

“ We adopt a broad and holistic concept of ECCE as the provision of care, education, health, nutrition, and protection of children aged zero to eight years of age. ECCE is therefore a right and an indispensable foundation for lifelong learning.”

Moscow Framework for Action and Cooperation
UNESCO Conference on Early childhood Care and Education
27-29 September 2010

2. What defines quality in ECEC?

Researchers and practitioners typically define quality as:

a) Structural quality:

- space
- group size
- qualifications of staff
- Curriculum content and length

b) Process quality:

- interactions between educators and children
- family involvement
- interaction between children and appropriate materials and toys
- pedagogy

Policymakers are typically more interested in:

- a) finding practical solutions to improve quality in ECEC rather than coming up with a list of definitions
- b) finding answers to:
 - What policies matter most in:
 - improving child outcomes (quality of output)
 - quality of ECEC services (quality of input)
 - How to implement policies to improve quality in ECEC

The OECD project "Encouraging Quality in ECEC" points to 5 policy levers to address these questions:

1. Setting out quality goals and regulations
2. Setting out curriculum guidelines and/or learning & well-being standards
3. Developing quality workforce (education, training, and working conditions)
4. Engaging families and communities
5. Advancing research, data collection and monitoring

1. Setting out quality goals and regulations

- Research shows a strong link between weak regulation and poor quality of ECEC services
- A strong and enforced regulatory framework can:
 - address the structural components of quality (such as staff-child ratio, staff qualification levels, etc.)
 - improve transparency of the quality of ECEC services and reassure parents that services provide a safe and supportive environment for their children

2. Setting out curriculum guidelines and/or learning & well-being standards

- Setting standards for what children should learn and how they should be taught and cared for plays a crucial role in enhancing children's cognitive and socio-emotional development
- Well-designed and fully-implemented ECEC curricula provide developmentally-appropriate cognitive challenges and support for children and lead to positive child outcomes
- Setting explicit curriculum helps to ensure good teaching/caring practices across different centres and different practitioners, while also leaving space for local innovations and adaptations

3. Developing quality workforce (education, training, and working conditions)

- Young children develop better language skills when ECEC staff are well-educated and qualified
- Staff with more formal education and specialised early childhood training typically engage in more stimulating, warm and supportive interactions with children
- Supportive working conditions underpin ECEC quality:
 - Characteristics of work environments shape staff's behaviour and effectiveness
 - Attracting, and retaining qualified staff (and avoiding high turnover)

4. Engaging families and communities

- Parent engagement
 - builds on parents' unique knowledge about their children as “first and primary educators”
 - promotes positive attitudes among parents toward children's learning
 - supports parent and community empowerment
- Openness and responsiveness to parents provides reassurance to parents and responds to parental demand for active involvement in their children's ECEC setting

5. Advancing research, data collection and monitoring

- Country experiences show that:
 - data can help establish facts about whether children have equitable access to high quality ECEC
 - regular monitoring can help identify and rectify problems
- A stable framework and long-term agenda for research and evaluation can help:
 - promote evidence-based policy making in ECEC
 - secure investment in research and development
 - align ECEC policy with other policies from different disciplines

How to improve policy settings?

Common challenges facing all OECD countries:

- Existing education budgets are already under pressure, making it even harder to find extra resources to expand access or upgrade quality
- ECEC benefits don't always show up quickly and opponents may seize on any evidence that doesn't show immediate strong cognitive gains
- There are sometimes competing interests and objectives within ECEC sector or between ECEC and school level
- There are often public misconceptions about what ECEC quality looks like
- Capacity constraints (e.g. availability of suitable buildings, well-qualified staff) may limit the speed of improvement and need to be tackled

Some factors that could strengthen implementation (lessons from OECD analysis of *Making Reform Happen*)

- Explain clearly underlying principles and aims of reforms and build consensus around them
- Make effective use of evidence to shape policies
- Actively engage all stakeholders in formulating and implementing policy responses
- Provide reassurance to ECEC staff and managers that they will be given the tools and support to make the changes needed
- Invest in change management skills in ECEC leadership and the ECEC system more broadly

Thank you

www.oecd.org/edu/earlychildhood